

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for entering the amendments filed 4 November 2009. Claims 17–22 are pending, of which claim 1 is independent. Applicants respectfully request entry of this response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 in that it places the application in better form for consideration on appeal.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejects claims 17–22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 5,507,544 to McQuade *et al.* (“McQuade”) in view of US 5,368,393 to Normann (“Normann”), further in view of US 6,341,710 to Danielson *et al.* (“Danielson”). According to the Examiner, it would be obvious to combine the combined pack of McQuade with the connector of Normann that has been modified by the protrusions and apertures of Danielson to arrive at the presently claimed subject matter. Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 17 requires that “the storage containers (10) are fixedly connected by virtue of the closure being plugged [onto the connector].” In other words, claim 17 requires that the containers be secured to the connector (and thus to each other) only when the closure is plugged onto the connector. This is not the case in either McQuade or Normann.

The handle of McQuade is a “an integrally molded plastic body provided with . . . a pair of spaced resilient clip portions dimensioned for engagement with handle portions of conventional containers.” *See* McQuade at Abstract. As can be seen at Fig. 8, the resilient clip portions (36 and 38) are adapted such the handle of a container can pass through a gap (40 and 44) and into jug handle receiving apertures (42 and 46), at which point the jug is fixed to the handle. In other words, the container can be fixed to the handle of McQuade completely independently of whether any sort of closure is added to the handle. Thus, the handle of McQuade operates in a fundamentally different way than the connector-closure components of the present claims.

The handle of Normann similarly has an integral component for accepting and securing the container to the handle. As can be seen at Fig. 1, the handle has two openings (14) at the bottom of two grooves (11 and 12), which are adapted to receive the handles of plastic bags. *See* col. 3, ln. 35–49. Although the handle does have closures (15), the closures have nothing to do with securing the plastic bags to the handle. Rather, the closures are present for a variety of other purposes, including to conceal various trinkets and personal

protection devices. *See* col. 3, ln. 49–57. It thus is clear that the device of Normann, as well as the closures disclosed therein, function in a fundamentally way than the connector-closure components of the present claims.

Danielson does not relate to combined packs or to handles for carrying containers and the Examiner does not rely on it as such. Accordingly, it cannot overcome the deficiencies of McQuade and Normann.

Thus, it is clear that the combination of McQuade, Normann, and Danielson does not result in a device wherein “storage containers are fixedly connected by virtue of [a] closure being plugged [onto a connector].” Thus, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established with respect to claim 17. Applicants thus respectfully submit that claim 17 is patentable over McQuade in view of Normann and further in view of Danielson. The remaining claims depend from claim 17 and likewise are not obvious over McQuade, Normann, and Danielson.

Applicants thus respectfully request that these bases for rejection be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the remarks above, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and request favorable action thereon. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if any additional information is required.

Applicants believe that no fees are due. If any additional fees are required, they may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-4254, referencing Attorney Docket No. 2903925-141000.

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Respectfully submitted,

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